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STATE FOR EAP/TC  
COMMERCE FOR 3132/USFCS/OIO/EAP/WZARIT  
TREASURY FOR OASIA/LMOGHTADER

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: ELTN ECON TW  
SUBJECT: HIGH-SPEED RAIL HOPES FOR CHRISTMAS CERTIFICATION

REF: TAIPEI 3687

¶1. (U) Summary: After two derailments in November, the earliest date Taiwan's high-speed rail can receive authorization from the Taiwan authorities to begin operations is December 25. End summary.

¶2. (U) After a series of technical setbacks, Taiwan's high-speed rail project has again delayed its opening. Test trains derailed on November 2 and November 24. Neither incident caused injuries or major damage, but both were widely reported in the media and elicited public concern. In response to the accidents, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC) High-Speed Rail Inspection Review Committee imposed new requirements on the Taiwan High-Speed Rail Corporation (THSRC).

¶3. (SBU) According to MOTC High-Speed Rail Bureau Section Chief Allen Hu, the committee imposed two major requirements. First, the high-speed rail must successful run test trains for a full month with no accidents. Second, it must conduct daily test runs of its rush hour schedule for two weeks with no accidents. Hu explained the one-month period for accident free testing started from the November 24 derailment. The earliest date it can fulfill the requirement is December 24. He said THSRC had begun the rush hour tests on December 7, running 9 trains between 10:00 and 11:30 am and one train per hour the rest of the day. If no accidents occur, the two-week rush hour test period will conclude December 21. Hu believes that THSRC should be able to meet both requirements. If it does, MOTC will be able to approve certification as early as December 25, the first work day after the conclusion of the test period.

¶4. (SBU) THSRC had scheduled an opening ceremony for the high-speed rail on December 7. It also planned a two-week promotional period during which it would invite selected guests to ride the new train free of charge. Public relations staff at THSRC informed AIT that the opening ceremony had been cancelled with no plans to reschedule it. THSRC was not able to provide any information about what kind of promotional operations it might conduct before regular operations commence.  
YOUNG